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Growing Media in France and Europe Inventory and Current Perspectives



Jean-Charles MICHEL¹, Gerald SCHMILEWSKI², and Laurent LARGANT³

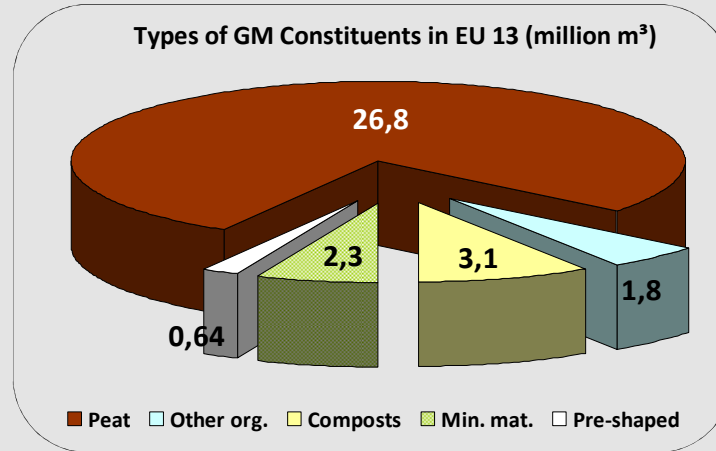
¹ Agrocampus Ouest, Angers, FRANCE ; ² Klasmann-Deilmann GmbH, Geeste, GERMANY ; ³ C.A.S., Angers, FRANCE

Purpose

In France and more largely in Europe, the main constituents of growing media (GM) used in soilless culture are peats, due to their physical qualities (water retention, aeration, physical stability). But, this subfossil carbon resource is non-renewable or slowly renewable and societal demand and ecological policies aim to a wise use of peat and peatland (Strategy for Responsible Peatland Management, IPS, 2010; EPAGMA Code of Practice for Responsible Peat Management, 2009) and to promote renewable organic materials (bark, coir, wood, compost, etc.).

Commission II ("Utilization of peat and peatlands for horticulture, energy and other economic purposes") of the International Peat Society conducted a survey in order to evaluate the amounts of growing media constituents used in 13 major growing media producer countries in the EU (A=Austria, B=Belgium, DK=Denmark, FIN=Finland, F=France, D=Germany, IRE=Ireland, I=Italy, NL=Netherlands, P=Poland, E=Spain, S=Sweden, UK=United Kingdom). This survey was continued in more details in France for several years by the C.A.S.

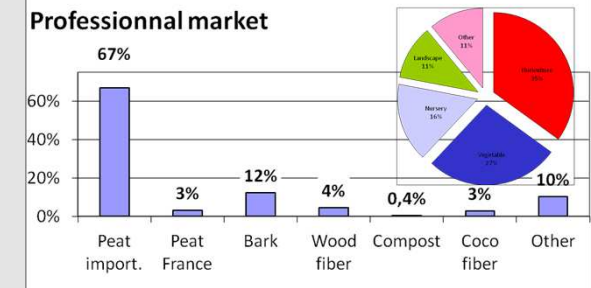
European Market (2005)



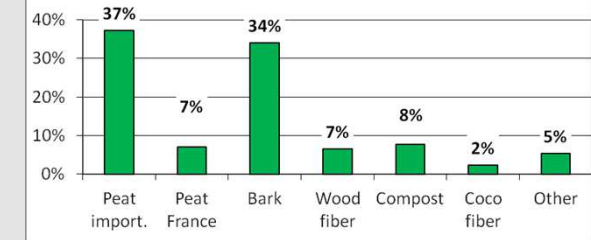
French Market (2010)

3.5 millions m³/year (50/50 Pro/Hobby)

Large difference in materials used between pro & hobby markets



Hobby market



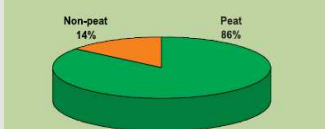
Main results and Conclusions

Data show that there is an increase in the use of composted organic material in some countries, in particular for the hobby sector. Synthetic materials are of no importance in EU. Due to the specific properties of mineral materials, these are often applied in professional media. The availability and price of organic materials other than peat, i.e. bark or coir, often determine if a material is used as a constituent or not. Bog peat is still the overall predominant growing medium constituent in the EU. Peat-free growing media are highly esteemed by some stakeholder and user groups but still play an overall minor role in industrial production of growing media.

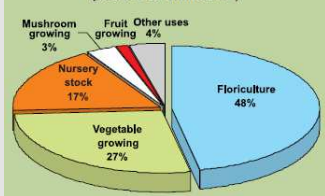
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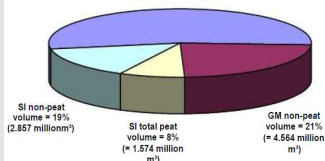
Peat versus non peat constituents for the production of professional growing media (Total > 22 million m³)



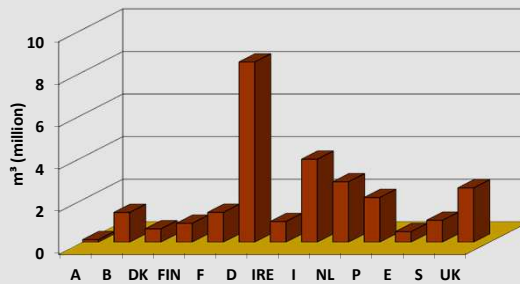
Peat usage for production of professional growing media by segment (Total = 19 million m³)



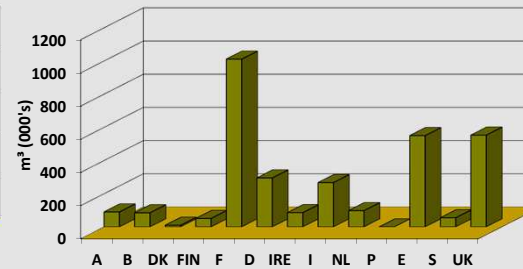
Growing media and soil improvers for the hobby market (10,363 million m³)



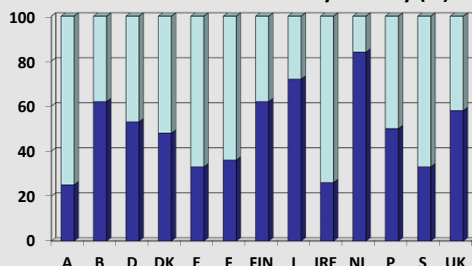
Peat use in EU 13 in 2005 (total 26,8 million)



Use of comp. materials in EU 13 in 2005 (total 3,151 million)



Production for markets by country (%)



Use of composted biodegradable waste in EU 11 (936.000 m³ = 2.7%)

